



Memorandum

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: Stephen M. Haase
Albert Balagso

**SUBJECT: BURBANK/DEL MONTE
STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS
IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

DATE: April 30, 2002

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 6
SNI AREA: Burbank/Del Monte

RECOMMENDATION

Staff advises the Planning Commission to recommend that the City Council: (1) approve the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative *Burbank/Del Monte Neighborhood Improvement Plan* as the City/community vision for the future of the Burbank/Del Monte area, (2) authorize the Administration to direct the City Departments and Agencies with implementation responsibilities to begin their respective activities, including the general oversight of the implementation of the *Plan* by the Redevelopment Agency, and (3) encourage the Burbank/Del Monte property owners, residents and community members to dedicate their time, energy and resources to implement the recommendations of the *Plan* and continue their community building activities.

BACKGROUND

Burbank/Del Monte Planning Area. The Burbank/Del Monte Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI) area is located on both sides of Interstate 280 with its westernmost border approximately three miles west of downtown San Jose. It generally is bordered by Highway 17/Interstate 880 on its western boundary with Los Gatos Creek/Bird Avenue on its eastern boundary. West San Carlos Street is a major commercial corridor running through the planning area and forming part of its north boundary; in places the planning area extends north to Forest Avenue, Park Avenue, and The Alameda. Fruitdale Avenue, Southwest Expressway, and Interstate 280 collectively form the southern border.

The Burbank/Del Monte SNI area includes a mix of residential, commercial and industrial uses, and includes the Midtown Specific Plan area and the West San Carlos Street Neighborhood Business District. The area's main commercial corridors are West San Carlos Street and Bascom Avenue with additional commercial uses located along Race, Meridian and Parkmoor. Three

major facilities within this SNI area are San Jose City College, the former Del Monte canning plant, and the Diridon Station.

The Burbank/Del Monte SNI planning area encompasses a mixture of City and unincorporated County residential areas. The primary City residential neighborhoods are Sherman Oaks and Hannah/Gregory. County pockets include the greater part of neighborhood known as Burbank, part of Buena Vista and the southerly portion of the Saint Leo's neighborhood. These City and County residential neighborhoods are comprised of a mixture of low to medium density residences as well as pockets of higher density apartment buildings.

The Diridon Station, located in the northeast corner of the Burbank/Del Monte SNI area is the subject of a joint Redevelopment/Valley Transportation Authority planning effort named the Diridon/Arena Strategic Development Plan. NAC members have been invited to and are participating in the creation of this plan.

Burbank/Del Monte Neighborhood Planning Process and Participation. During the preparation of the *Plan*, City staff and the planning consultants (MOORE IACOFANO GOLTSMAN, INC.) worked with community members and a 22-member Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC). The NAC met ten times from February 2001 through March 2002. The planning process, while led by the City, was designed to facilitate community consensus around a shared vision for the area regardless of City and County boundaries. The NAC also reflects this concept and is comprised of residents and business owners from both City and County pockets. In addition to the NAC meetings, five community workshops were held between March of 2001 and April of 2002.

The final two meetings of the planning phase (the March 28th NAC meeting and the April 18th community workshop) were well-attended. Many audience members were residents of unincorporated County areas who, while generally supportive of the contents of the *Plan*, expressed concern regarding what they called "forced annexation" and potential use of eminent domain in the proposed SNI Redevelopment Project Area. At these two meetings, staff explained that adoption of the *Neighborhood Improvement Plan* does not constitute a decision about, nor is related to, annexation of the County pockets. In addition, based on NAC and community input, wording in the *Plan* pertaining to the potential use of eminent domain was tightly constructed to provide reassurance that this powerful tool would not be used lightly and would only be used for projects that had broad community support, including allowing input from the NAC on such decisions.

At the April 18th meeting, the NAC voted unanimously to approve the *Neighborhood Improvement Plan*, including revisions made that evening based on community input. One NAC member, who is a Board member of the Burbank Community Association, voted in support of the *Plan* with the condition that a special public meeting be sponsored by representatives of the Redevelopment Agency and City staff in order to further clarify for the community issues pertaining to use of eminent domain and annexation. This meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, April 30, 2002.

ANALYSIS

Purposes of the Plan. The purposes of the *Burbank/Del Monte Neighborhood Improvement Plan* are to document the community's vision for its neighborhood, identify the community's specific goals and objectives for improving the area, and provide the City, Redevelopment Agency and various community stakeholders with a clear guide for neighborhood improvements.

Vision. Stakeholders in the Burbank/Del Monte area crafted a vision for the future of their neighborhood where:

- Burbank/Del Monte is a safe, desirable place for families to live, work and play;
- Residents feel a unique sense of place based on the neighborhood's historic character, including a connection to its agricultural history;
- Residential areas are attractive, well-maintained and encourage pedestrian and bicycle circulation;
- The area has vital commercial areas with attractive, well-maintained buildings, landscaping, adequate parking, innovative public transportation options and pedestrian-friendly streets;
- Residents have convenient access to community facilities, including space for musical and theater performances as well as educational and recreational programs for all ages;
- A network of open spaces exist for residents to enjoy, including a completed trail along Los Gatos Creek;
- Neighbors have pride in their community and work together on community issues; and
- Residents, business owners, property owners, and the City all contribute to the common goal of caring for the people and neighborhoods of Burbank/Del Monte.

Draft Plan. Over the course of the planning process, community members discussed many actions that could bring positive changes to the area. The Strategic Action Plan is comprised of those Action Items selected by community members as the best means for achieving the community's shared vision for the future.

A. The "Top Ten" Priority Actions. The "Top Ten" Priority Actions represent the short list of priority actions that the community selected as having the greatest potential for positive impact. Priority actions are ranked in order of importance for immediate funding:

1. Complete development of the Buena Vista Tot Lot, and acquire the parcel at Scott Street and Clifton Avenue for use as a pocket park.
2. Designate Scott Street and Auzerais Avenue as the primary pedestrian/bikeway through the neighborhood and complete streetscape improvements.
3. Conduct a feasibility study for developing a "freeway park" over Interstate 280.
4. Work with San Jose City College to develop a shared 17,000 square-foot multi-use recreation facility/community center at San Jose City College.
5. Conduct a programs/services inventory and a facility needs assessment, and identify possible sites for neighborhood facilities as needed to fill service gaps.
6. Initiate an annual bulky waste pick-up and hold ongoing neighborhood clean-up events.

7. Strengthen Code Enforcement and Housing programs to help ensure that residential units are improved and well-maintained.
8. Create an economic development strategy for West San Carlos Street and Bascom Avenue.
9. Establish a specialty trolley service along West San Carlos Street and Bascom Avenue.
10. Develop a new public neighborhood park along Los Gatos Creek at Auzerais Avenue.

Another item of importance to the NAC, though not part of the final top ten list, is to “implement strategies to address any adverse impacts related to adult business activity in Burbank/Del Monte neighborhoods.”

B. Other Improvement Goals and Projects Underway. The entire Action Plan is presented as a matrix, which includes the above “Top Ten” Priority Actions, plus many additional items, totaling 167 Action Items. Following are some highlights of actions begun through community and staff efforts related to the SNI process.

1. Parks and Open Space. Open space areas are extremely deficient in this area. The overall strategy developed by the community to address this need is to develop a network of parks, residential pocket parks, community gardens and transit-oriented parks/plazas throughout the neighborhood. As a start, the Parks division has been working with the Buena Vista neighborhood to create a tot lot in their area. To date, the property has been purchased and the design phase is nearly complete.
2. Pedestrian and Bicycle-Friendly Environment. The overall strategy is to create safe pedestrian and bicycle connections to key destinations within the Burbank/Del Monte neighborhood. Actions underway include a joint City/County project to complete many of the sidewalks along Scott Street, a major east-west corridor through the heart of the Burbank/Del Monte SNI area.
3. Circulation, Transportation and Parking. Primary concerns related to this topic focus on residential areas adjacent to San Jose City College. City College is constructing a new parking garage to help alleviate the parking issues and the Department of Transportation is working with Sherman Oaks neighborhood residents to identify traffic calming and intersection improvements that may help to ease these concerns in the future.
4. Economic Development. The main goal is to attract and retain a diverse mix of family-friendly, local and regional-serving retail. Associated with this SNI process, the Redevelopment Agency and West San Carlos Business Association are working with the District 6 Council Office and community residents to create an economic development strategy for the area. In addition, the County District Attorney’s Office and several NAC members have formed an Adult Uses Task Force to proactively monitor and enforce laws related to the operation of the numerous adult-oriented businesses in this area.
5. Revitalize Housing. This goal pertains to improving the condition of the existing housing stock. Actions to date have focused on the Richmond-Menker Apartments, a collection of fourplexes under the ownership of many individuals. In the course of the SNI

planning process, Project Blossom went into this area to assist property owners in forming an association. Housing and Planning staff are now working closely with these owners and a larger group of stakeholders formed with the assistance of Neighborhood Services staff known as the Richmond-Menker Action Task Force, to engage in a joint project that would improve the overall appearance and conditions of these apartments, and ultimately the overall environment of this neighborhood.

Issues of particular note. The following items are of particular note to the Planning Commission and City Council, and are intended to provide background on some issues of concern to the greater Burbank/Del Monte community.

Revitalization of West San Carlos Street. The *Plan* identifies the revitalization of West San Carlos Street as a high priority. While there is general support for the creation of higher-density, mixed-use buildings along this future transit corridor, many residents and business owners also expressed an interest in maintaining many of the smaller businesses and buildings that are considered community assets, such as the businesses along Antique Row. In addition, there is appreciation for the “character” of this street and it is hoped that much of the uniqueness of this area will be retained as properties are improved or developed.

The I-280 Freeway Park. Due to the lack of available space for parks and community facilities, NAC members proposed the innovative notion of building a platform over the recessed section of I-280 in order to create more open space in the area. Through the initiative of NAC members, this far-reaching idea has begun to gather support, including some preliminary indications that federal funding could possibly be obtained for this project. While this is a new concept for San Jose, there are other cities successfully implementing this such as Seattle and San Diego. Preliminary estimates for the cost of constructing the platform are still being formed, but needless to say, this is a multi-million dollar capital investment.

Plan Implications for County Pockets. There has perhaps been some concern expressed by County public officials that this planning effort has created an unrealistic expectation among County residents about the implementation of the action items. Community members, however, were consistently reminded at NAC meetings and community workshops that the County may not have the resources to support implementation efforts – either through programs and services, or capital funding. This is stated clearly in the *Plan* document on pages 10 through 14. In addition, City staff is committed to continue working with both City and County residents involved with the NAC to implement the *Plan* actions, including identifying alternative funding sources where necessary.

Annexation. Another concern expressed by community members revolves around the issue of annexation of the County pockets. There was concern expressed that perhaps the City’s intention is to “force” annexation upon the County pockets. Staff reminded those concerned that it has been a long-standing agreement between the City and County jurisdictions to encourage the annexation of urbanized County pockets into the City. Staff has also explained that this *Plan* is not expressly tied to annexation, except that City programs and services outlined in the Action Items are not available to County residents and businesses.

Eminent Domain. There has been a great deal of anxiety and concern expressed by residents and some NAC members about the potential use of eminent domain in this SNI area. While it is understood that this can be a useful tool for making some improvements desired by the community, there is fear among community members that extending this power over the entire SNI area will result in the “widespread loss” of single-family homes to make way for new development. To help allay these fears, assurances have been put into the *Plan*, including a desire that the NAC be given input in eminent domain decisions in their area to ensure that its use is consistent with achieving goals that have broad community support.

Lot consolidation. A concept contained in the *Plan* relates to the fact that many of the commercial lots, particularly along West San Carlos Street and Bascom Avenue, are very shallow and do not, in their current configuration, allow for the type of businesses and new development desired by the community. In this context, it is suggested that one strategy may be to encourage and allow lot consolidations to occur in order to support better site configurations and adequate parking. Taken out of context, this strategy caused anxiety for residents along streets such as Flagg Avenue where residential lots back onto the Bascom Avenue commercial corridor. To address those concerns, the *Plan* was more specifically worded to portray where lot consolidation should be considered and not considered as a valid approach. This can be found on pages 79 through 81 of the document.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The *Plan* was developed in close coordination with residents and property and business owners of the Burbank/Del Monte area through more than one year of monthly Neighborhood Advisory Committee meetings and five community workshops. All property owners, residents, and business owners within the Burbank/Del Monte SNI area were invited to the community workshops through postcard mailers, flyers, and PRNS, PBCE and neighborhood association contacts. Community members actively participated in each phase of the planning process.

COORDINATION

The preparation of the *Plan* was coordinated with the District 6 Council Office, the City Manager’s Office, the City Attorney’s Office, and various Departments and Agencies, including the Departments of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement; Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services; Transportation; Public Works; Housing; and Police as well as the Redevelopment Agency, the Valley Transportation Authority, and various County departments. In particular, the County Planning staff have been very helpful and in attendance at numerous staff team and community meetings related to the development of this *Plan*. Input on the draft *Plan* was solicited from County Counsel and the local County Supervisor’s Office. However, to date, no response from those offices has been submitted to City Planning staff.

PLANNING COMMISSION

April 30, 2002

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CEQA

An addendum was prepared to the San Jose 2020 General Plan Environmental Impact Report which was previously certified on August 16, 1994 by the City Council (Resolution Number 65459).

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